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The Mom's Guide to Quitting Your Job

BY KIM RITBERG

If you're going 100 miles per hour in a car and you try to smell the roses, you're going to get whiplash. As a recovering workaholic, I should know. I spent fifteen years as an executive producer in national television news and the entertainment industry, creating content for Netflix, Fox, Us Weekly, Nordstrom, Target, AT&T, and more. For years, I was content being in the center of the rat race, until the day I was in the hospital delivery room, awaiting the imminent birth of my second child. Between the panting and the eagerness of this moment, I found myself on the phone frantically reviewing resumes after a messy corporate acquisition led to some of my 17-person staff fleeing the job. At that instant, as if a lightbulb suddenly turned on, I had my moment of truth: this was not the life I wanted anymore.

Working in media is a nonstop gig, and loyalties aren't always reciprocated. I'd leveled up in the industry by saying "yes" to everything for more than a decade. Now, as a mother of two, I needed to start saying no and begin prioritizing myself, my family, and my life. And so, nearly cold turkey, I quit, finally removing myself from the neverending hamster wheel of the corporate world. While today I am happier than I've ever been both professionally and personally, the first year on my own was filled with doubt, confusion, and feelings of isolation. In the hopes that this advice will help you create a career path that leaves you fulfilled and happy, here are the things I wish I knew when making the decision to quit my corporate career.

1. Identify what you don't like about your current work situation

Imagine it's 90 degrees out, and your kids say they don't like going to the beach or the pool. So then what? Sitting indoors all day will not actually bring them joy, despite

their insistence to the contrary. Likewise, slamming that metal door behind you and marching out of that gray office with no set plan will not bring you the life you want.

Ask yourself: is there something specific you dislike about your job? Or does it extend to your career as a whole? Do you want fewer hours, or would having a boss who doesn't micromanage you solve your problem? Answer those questions before handing in your resignation notice.

It was absolutely clear to me that I wanted to work for myself. I wanted control of my career and flexibility within my schedule. I didn't want to sprint home from the office at 5:30 to steal an hour with my daughter before bed. I didn't want to pretend to be at a doctor's appointment to take my son to swim class. I was excited to leave office politics behind and focus on the work. I figured worse comes to worse, I could always find another job in my field if it didn't work out. However, it still took me two full years to gather up my "3 C's": courage, confidence, and clarity, to really do it. It's okay to take it slow, but not so slow that you'll be ready to retire by the time you pull the ripcord!

2. Don't use other people's definition of success

Dr. Lisa Damour, PhD, host of the podcast Ask Lisa: The Psychology of Parenting says it's important for you to define your own success:

"It is easy to look at the people around us and think 'well if they can do that I should be able to do that. Or why am I not doing what they're doing?' The question is 'Can you be your own yardstick?' Can you decide for yourself what would be gratifying?"

For me, in my grasping (and gripping tightly) for a more balanced life, I had some big realizations. I recognized that I had to give up a title and a job that perhaps seemed glamorous to the outside world. Once I removed my ego from the decision and focused on the fact that it was my choice, and that my overall hap-

piness and balance was more important than any title, I felt freer. Ironically, once I set those external measurements aside, that's when I started earning industry awards!

3. Start networking!

I don't mean meetups in mahogany bars with sad peanuts in small bowls — actually any social interaction can be "networking." Coffee, wine, volunteering, pickleball session, surfing... you get my point. Any time you're connecting with others, you're networking. In deciding how big or small you want to grow your business, and as you begin to price your services, utilize networking to get more insight into what your standards should be. Leadership coach Leah Wiseman Fink says, "Money's not an ugly dirty topic. Ask your friends and industry peers what they charge, tell what you charge."

Connect with your first, second and third degree contacts on social media and on email — they will be your biggest cheerleaders and referrers, at least at first. My first big client came from a referral from a professional contact. That led to a long term consulting project and gave me the confidence to tell myself, 'I can actually do this.'

Networking (or socializing, as it should be reframed) may seem daunting when you're in transition. Neha Ruch of Mother Untitled, a community for ambitious moms leaning in to family life, has advice on owning your story. When someone asks "What do you do?", Neha recommends answering with "This is what I'm doing right now. I'm choosing to ____" (and fill in the blank with whatever path you're on). This comes from a place of choice and a position of power, instead of a position where you're not wriggling in your seat answering, "Um, I used to be... and now I am sort of..." Own your choice!

4. Get a mom posse

Remember when you had your first baby and



you felt totally lost, wondering “How do I do this? What did I get myself into?” So you desperately befriended every mom with a stroller?

Find other moms who are working outside the 9-to-5. Your close friends who are climbing the corporate ladder may or may not understand your new challenges.

In my experience, when you tell people you quit your job, some of them will look at you like you have three heads. This is why you must find the people who will celebrate your choice and cheer you on! Other self-employed moms, consultants, stay-at-home moms with side hustles, they will be the ones texting you with balloon emojis when you land a client and grumpy emojis when you're chasing

down an invoice. (Sorry, yes, those things sometimes happen!)

5. Remember your priorities

Panicking that you made the wrong decision? About to start job-hunting again? Tune out the noise! Sometimes I can still feel the buzzing energy of the ‘rat race’, but I’m trying to stay true to the reasons I decided to work for myself: I wanted more time with my kids and more control over my schedule. If I’m spending 60 hours a week ‘networking’ and posting on social media, why did I make this career change? Surely there is a different and smoother path?

Believe in yourself. You can do it. I promise.

My journey from burnt out media exec to founder of an award-winning video strategy company led me to launch Mom’s Exit Interview, a resource for moms who want to thrive without the 9-to-5. These tips and advice come from the awesome guests on our show – and myself!

Kim Rittberg is the host of Mom’s Exit Interview – <http://moms-exit-interview.com> and is a Gold Telly Award winner, Webby Honoree, a Content Strategy Expert and Creative Executive Producer in TV, digital video, and audio. She has been a speaker and instructor at PENN, Syracuse, and General Assembly and is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania Annenberg School. Visit her website here: [Kim Rittberg](http://kimrittberg.com)